

# **The Advisory Committee View**

By the California Water Plan Update 2005 Public Advisory Committee

**Thoughts on the  
California  
Department of  
Water Resource's  
(DWR) Water Plan  
Update Public  
Review Draft**

# THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE VIEW

June 2005

This California Water Plan Update 2005, the eighth since 1957, comprehensively reviews the state's water problems and opportunities. Like California, the plan update has changed since 1957. A growing population, increased pressures on our natural environment, concerns about drinking water quality, costs, and many unknowns including climate change are now water planning considerations.

A diverse group of people assisted in developing the plan by serving on an Advisory Committee. The group represented organizations and interests concerned with water resources management. Some of us, including Native Americans and environmental justice groups, had not been represented in past advisory committees. Knowing the plan was DWR's, not ours; we shared suggestions and concerns and posed tough questions. We served as advisors.

As a group, we agreed on many things, but not everything. We expected this. This document explains things we mostly agreed about, describes where we do not agree, and notes the places we still have questions.

We encourage you to read the Public Review Draft thoroughly, participate in the public review process, and offer your comments. This solid planning effort deserves your attention.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document offers the many perspectives of the Water Plan Update appointed Public Advisory Committee. It does not represent a policy or view of the DWR, the facilitators or any individual Public Advisory Committee member or member organization. The sole purpose of this document is to share the differing perspectives of the Advisory Committee in order to help the public understand more about the deliberations leading to the Water Plan Update.

## AREAS OF SUBSTANTIAL AGREEMENT

Members of the Advisory Committee generally agreed about **Using a different approach than in the past.** The plan was developed with a large, diverse, and vocal Advisory Committee and tended public involvement. Computer technology helped DWR keep Advisory Committee members and the public up-to-date and informed. Activities and information related to the plan can easily be found at <http://www.waterplan.water.ca.gov/>.

**Using the document as both a policy guiding strategic plan and a source of technical information.** The Advisory Committee felt a strategic plan, as opposed to a pure technical plan, would help Californians better plan and assess state water management.

**A need for more information than is now available.** We worked with DWR to create a phased work plan. The Plan outlines a schedule to develop improved analytical tools and data. Most desired new work will be completed as part of a 3-phase work plan. The group believes this will help DWR meet Water Code and other legal requirements in the next update. The information will also help local and regional agencies with integrated water resource planning and management. Phased work plan details are found on page 1-5 of Volume 1: Strategic Plan.

*(Continued on page 2 ...)*

**THE PLAN INCLUDES IMPORTANT NEW FEATURES**

- More complete and detailed information on actual water flows than were available in previous plans. Called water portfolios, water use categories and water supply information span a full hydrologic cycle (wet, dry and average).
- Except for agricultural trends, use of historic data instead of projections based on current conditions. This information creates an appreciation for California’s complex and variable water flows.
- Regional analysis and reports identify unique challenges and specific ongoing programs and plans. Water management is mostly local and regional. Regional reports allow a clearer focus on these problems, within a statewide context.
- Multiple future scenarios (recognizing that uncertainty over the next 30 years makes a single, likely future impossible to present). Numerous events and choices, many unrelated to water planning, may drive the future.
- A focus on integrated regional water management as a key strategy and use of a full range of water management tools. There is no single solution to California’s water problems. Local, regional, and statewide integration of multiple solutions will be required.
- The plan outlines methods for data analysis and scenario development to be used in future updates.

**MORE AREAS OF AGREEMENT**

*(Continued from page 1)*

**Clear mission and vision statements, five high-level goals, fourteen recommendations, and specific action items for each of the fourteen recommendations.** Other strong points are

identification of implementation challenges, as well as performance measures to track progress. This provides a strategic roadmap. It is a call to action.

**Clear statements on essential support activities.** The plan calls on the state to provide leadership, establish credible and reliable financing mechanisms, clarify the authorities and responsibilities of different entities in the water community, invest in water technology, and ensure that equitable decisions are made to provide for fair treatment of low-income people and disadvantaged communities of color in California. One goal is better application of environmental justice criteria and greater inclusion of underserved communities in planning and decision making, with special sensitivity to the unique obligations to Native American communities.

**The presentation of links to CALFED,** that recognize the role the CALFED Bay-Delta Program plays in overall California water issues.

**The importance of water quality to protecting California’s waters.**

**The presentation of a good balance between data and policies.**

**Incorporation of information from the state’s General Plan Guidelines to promote a better link between water supply planning and local land use planning.**

**The Water Plan contains a responsible chapter on climate change.**

**AREAS OF DISAGREEMENT AMONG ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Sometimes the Advisory Committee did not agree with DWR and/or one another on various aspects of the plan. It has been difficult for DWR to address the sometimes-competing interests of the Advisory Committee members. To some extent this represents different philosophical approaches to dealing with California water problems. The following explains these disagreements in more detail.

- New surface storage, linked to the CalFed program. There were a variety of reasons for this disagreement.
- The group disagrees about the utility, cost-effectiveness, and need for additional surface storage and whether adequate water supply can be provided by the measures described. Some believe there is a need for more storage than the plan recommends while others believe water conservation and efficiency are much better alternatives than expanding infrastructure. The group also disagreed as to how much ecological damage occurs and/or should be tolerated in development of additional water supply.
- Some believe the plan underestimates implementation challenges and suggest more evaluation.

**Disagreements** (continued from page 2)

- There is disagreement about the contribution of agriculture to the overall water efficiency estimates for 2030. Some believe the estimates for water savings for agriculture appear very low. Others believe the agricultural industry has already voluntarily adopted efficiencies shown to improve return on investment, and/or that agriculture is very efficient now within nearly all hydrologic regions due to extensive re-use of agricultural return flows. Some believe numbers for all water use efficiency (not just agricultural) approaches overestimate the potential.
- There are legal requirements for the document. One law requires DWR to make assessments of water needed for the provision of food and fiber to the population. DWR held off in this assessment, waiting for the results of a study to be conducted by another state agency. This study did not occur and DWR provided an interim response to the legislative requirement in the Volume 4: Reference Guide. Some members of the group strongly disagreed with the interim findings and approach.
- Another law requires DWR to provide a gap analysis of predicted water need versus predicted available water. Given the potential for multiple options, the plan instead addressed multiple uncertainties and recommends more complex modeling and other analytical tests than now available. The plan also outlines development of future water use and water supply scenarios. Some find this approach does not meet legal requirements for this document.
- Some believe the plan pushes too hard for market-based solutions to allocating or deciding who gets water when the supply cannot meet all demands. Some believe this could preclude agriculture or the environment from receiving water. Others suggest the plan needs to address long-term socioeconomic issues associated with water transfers. Still others believe changes could compromise historic public legal water rights. Some believe the plan needs to address long-term socioeconomic issues associated with water transfers and not merely ignore these issues.
- Some contend DWR's data as presented in the plan support approaches that are less infrastructure-intensive in nature and feel that the plan is deficient for not including a third *Initiative for Reliability* that directs the state to actively pursue those approaches.
- Others point to DWR data that suggests the major source of "new water" for the state will come through conservation and efficiency measures and that "water efficiency" should be elevated and defined as one of the Initiatives of the Plan. Several others think that the numbers underestimate the potential of water use efficiency approaches. The data and analyses for water use efficiency in the plan are the subject of much debate (as are all the numbers).

**UNCERTAINTIES IN THE PLAN**

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Funding at the federal, state and local levels is severely restricted with serious consequences if recommended actions are not funded.</li> <li>2. Actions to sustain water supply reliability are directed by local water agencies but the plan does not identify mechanisms to enforce or induce action.</li> <li>3. The focus on integrated regional water management is positive but the document does not address state leadership to support and oversee the regional process nor how interregional conflicts will be handled.</li> <li>4. The update relies in part on the beneficiaries of water being the primary funders of new infrastructure. There is no definition of</li> </ol> | <p>the term beneficiary. There is a need to outline how the beneficiaries pay principle is to be implemented.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Some express concern the plan does not address how regions will determine if they will collectively develop enough water both to meet the water needs of their local population and to produce food and other commodities needed by humanity at large.</li> <li>6. There is no specific mechanism to measure whether or not implementation of the plan or individual recommendations was successful.</li> <li>7. The scenarios will need more development for decision makers to determine viability of the proposed options.</li> </ol> |
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